

Step by Step: Beautify Your Deck with a Weekend Facelift

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Siting the Cabin

A well-sited cabin not only graces the land, it also takes full advantage of the setting to keep you cozy. So if you're going to build (or re-build), take the time you need to get to know your land. One architect we've spoken with actually recommends camping on your land so you can get better acquainted with it: "Spend as much time on the property as you can. After a while, you're going to know where the house should be," says Robert Knight, AIA, author of *A House on the Water: Inspiration for Living at the Water's Edge*.

When Virginia Mars worked with her builder on the design of her new lakehome (shown here), two important factors to her were light and views. "I wanted lots of light, and of course, good views of the lake," she says. "All the living areas have a lake view." Read more about her special getaway on page 56. ❧

photo by Rich Frutchey, courtesy Timberpeg



Virginia Mars' lakehome has plenty of places from which to enjoy the outdoors, including a screen porch off the dining room, covered porches off the entry and master bedroom, and a patio with a fire pit.

An Award-winning Timber Frame:

A Lakehouse for All Time

story by Susan Bady
photos by Rich Frutchey,
courtesy Timberpeg

“How sweet it is” could be one thought that crosses Virginia Mars’ mind

when she relaxes in her timber-frame lakehome on New Hampshire’s beautiful Lake Sunapee. After all, she’s been in love with waterfront living since she was a young girl.

But she might also be thinking, “How green it is.”

A Fan of Eco-friendly

Building an environmentally sustainable home was important to Virginia, a conservationist who does volunteer work for a number of nonprofit organizations including the EcoHealth Alliance. Green building “wasn’t something that just sort of popped into my head.” She has attended conferences that had seminars on solar energy and is well-read on the subject.

Virginia’s vacation home on the lake, which she calls “Omega,” utilizes state-of-the-art green features such as structural insulated panels (SIPs), a geothermal heating system, a solar hot water heater and solar photovoltaic (PV) roof panels. Sitting on a footprint that measures 1,537 square feet, the home isn’t tiny, but it’s not so large that she feels swallowed up by it. “It’s not a McMansion, which I definitely did not want,” she says. “I can be there by



Named 2010 Timber Frame of the Year, this New Hampshire lakehome reflects its owner’s dedication to reducing her carbon footprint. (Awarded by the Timber Frame Business Council.)

myself and feel very comfortable.”

Almost every system in the home is powered by solar energy, but in case there is insufficient sunlight, a propane-powered auxiliary boiler is ready to pick up the slack.

“New Hampshire is not ideal as far as solar is concerned, because you don’t have the same degree of sunlight as you do in Arizona,” says Virginia. “But the solar hot water is totally efficient. I learned that it takes only three hours of sunlight to heat water. That’s been

very beneficial. I doubt that I’m ever going to have enough to sell back to the public utility, but it cuts down on the use of electricity.”

The Beginning

As a child, Virginia used to visit her aunt, who had a cottage on Long Island Sound. But the cottage lifestyle became even more enticing after she and her then-husband, Forrest, became acquainted with Lake Sunapee. “My brother had a cottage on the lake that



ABOVE: Virginia loves to entertain at her cabin, saying, "We had a family reunion that was a great success and may be repeated next year. I've also had Thanksgiving dinner there." **BELOW:** Virginia chose a timber-frame home because it was a natural fit for the wooded surroundings. The home, with its open floor plan, offers plenty of places from which to enjoy dazzling views of Lake Sunapee, including a screen porch off the dining room, covered porches off the entry and master bedroom, and a patio with a fire pit.



was originally called Judge's Cove, but after we built Omega, my sister-in-law renamed the place "Alpha" – which is very appropriate for my larger-than-life brother."

In the 1970s, Virginia and Forrest bought a small piece of her brother's land and built a small cottage, which they called "Beta." The couple divorced in 1990. A few years later, the elderly owners of a larger property adjacent to Beta passed away, and Virginia purchased it too. A tiny camp on this site was torn down so Omega could be built.

Structural Beauty

Virginia fell in love with timber-frame construction after having dinner at a friend's home. "I hadn't planned on building a house at that time, but

I was very much impressed,” she says. “I asked the homeowners who their architect was, and they said it was a Timberpeg house.” Virginia liked the fact that the timbers form the actual structure – they’re not merely decorative accents. Timberpeg, headquartered in West Lebanon, N.H., provides design services and manufactures the weather-tight shell of each home and then ships the package to the client’s building site, where a local contractor erects it.

Like all Timberpeg homes, Virginia’s is built with SIPs, which are highly energy-efficient because they have an insulating core of expanded polystyrene foam, sandwiched between two layers of oriented strand board. The panels run alongside the entire frame without gaps. She upgraded to insect-repellent SIPs, which are a little thicker. “The house is extraordinarily weather-tight, both in winter and summer,” she says.

The Simple Life

Virginia’s primary residence is in McLean, Va., but there’s something special about Omega. It’s a place where she can enjoy the simple pleasures of summer nights on the screen porch or campfires on the patio. She skis at nearby Mount Sunapee in the winter and accompanies friends on foliage tours in the fall.

Sometimes it’s just Virginia and her dog, a bichon bolognese named “Dolce.” Other times, she entertains visiting family members, including her four daughters and 11 grandchildren.

When she’s there alone, Virginia enjoys gardening, needlepoint, reading and projects around the house. If she has guests, she enjoys showing them the surrounding area. Family visits involve hiking, boating or skiing, depending on the season. “My problem is that I don’t spend a lot of time sitting down,” she laughs. “I tend to be active.”

The property came with two docks along its 200 feet of waterfront. Virginia rebuilt the docks, which had a significant amount of rot. Her nephews keep their motorboat at Omega, and it gets plenty of use, since her daughter and son-in-law and their children love to water-ski. For quiet



A fireplace with the look of rough, dry-laid stone is the centerpiece of the living room. “It’s wonderful because it doesn’t look like there’s any mortar to it,” Virginia says.



While she's had as many as 75 guests, usually it's just Virginia and Dolce, her bichon bolognese (above).

Guest sleeping space includes a loft above the second-floor bathroom (left). The loft, with its captain's ladder, is a big hit with Virginia's grandchildren.

paddles around the lake, there's also a kayak and canoe.

Open for Viewing

Virginia wanted her new home to be relatively compact, with an open plan that flowed easily. "I wanted lots of light, and of course, good views of the lake," she says. "All the living areas have a lake view, even my bedroom."

Jay Tucker of Old Hampshire Designs in New London, N.H., collaborated on the design and built the home using Timberpeg's package. He especially enjoyed Virginia's project.

"So many timber-frame homes that you see are just huge and massive," says Tucker. "This house has a wonderful scale to it. It's very cozy even though it has some cathedral ceilings."

In addition to the open plan and a first-floor master bedroom, Virginia asked for special accommodations for guests. She wanted a European-style bathroom on the second floor that has a sink and toilet in one room and another sink and tub in the adjacent

room. She also requested a sink for one of the guest bedrooms.

Above the second-floor bathroom is a loft with a captain's ladder that the grandchildren greatly enjoy. When necessary, Beta (the cottage next door) can be used as auxiliary guest quarters.

Lake-friendly Landscaping

Virginia nixed the original landscaping plan, which called for grass. She didn't want the maintenance, and she knew runoff from lawn fertilizer would have been detrimental to the lake. Instead, she used wood chips and mulch, accented by colorful flowerpots. "My gardens are more English than French in the sense that they're more informal," Virginia says. "I have a reasonable amount of sun, so I can grow flowers at the lakehouse that I can't grow at my Virginia home, because it's too shaded."

She typically heads for Omega around Memorial Day to plant flowers and prep the house for summer.

In winter, she spends a week

to 10 days there, depending on the weather and skiing conditions.

Lakeside Legacy

Virginia is satisfied that she is leaving her children and grandchildren a home that rests lightly upon the earth – not that she's planning to leave it any time soon.

"We had a family reunion that was a great success and may be repeated next year," she says. "About 75 people came. I've also had Thanksgiving dinner there. Life at the cottage is less structured and certainly more relaxed, although there's always the computer to keep one tied to the 'other life.'" ❧

For Susan Bady, living near the lake is almost as good as living on it – which she intends to do one day.

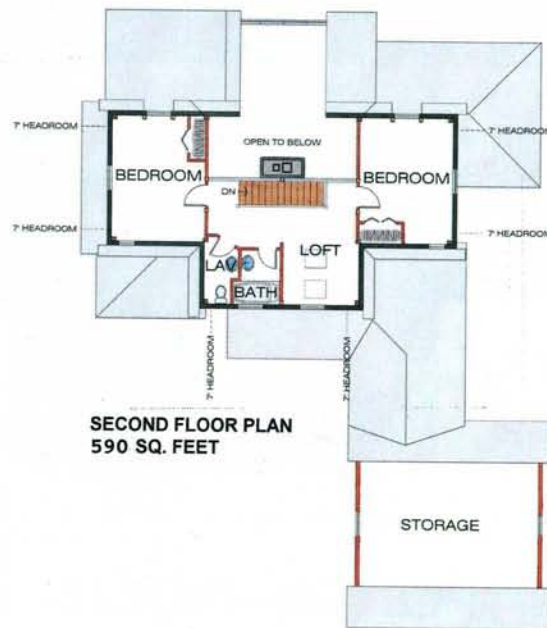
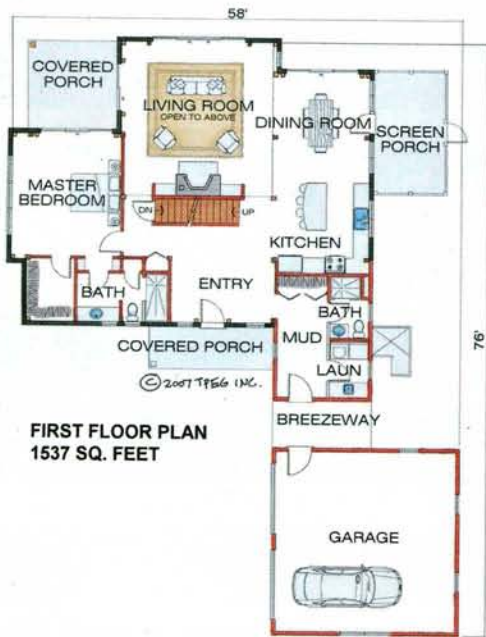
READER RESOURCES:

- Old Hampshire Designs, www.oldhampshiredesigns.com
- Timberpeg, www.timberpeg.com.

Winning floor plan

Virginia Mars' award-winning timber-frame cabin is based on the Lakewood Home floor plan by Timberpeg. This charming, compact cabin offers one-story living, with the master bedroom suite, living and dining areas, and kitchen all on the first floor. Two additional bedrooms and full bath upstairs are ideal for family or guests, and there is a loft overlooking the great room. To incorporate a European feel for her home, Virginia requested that each bedroom have its own private sink. The upstairs bathroom is designed very functionally for overnight guests. The bathtub and sink are adjacent to, but separate from, the toilet area (also with its own sink) – which allows for separate use.

The wraparound deck and screened-in porch make this house perfect for a lakeside retreat.



FRONT ELEVATION

Designer/Manufacturer: Timberpeg
Builder: Old Hampshire Designs
Two-story Home / Square Footage: 2,127
Bedrooms: 3 plus a loft / Baths: 3-plus